

July 1, 1969

History of the Department of Slavic
Languages and Literatures

The Beginnings - 1942 -- 1959

In the summer of 1942, under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies, an intensive Russian course was initiated with Professor Peter Epp of the German Department as the instructor. During the academic year, this first course was followed by a regular course at the intermediate level. By 1944 the University assumed the financial responsibility for the Russian language program. In 1946, Mrs. Epp who had been her husband's assistant in the course, assumed her husband's duties when he was incapacitated, and after his death, received a regular appointment to teach Russian in the German Department.

Years of Development - 1960--1970

To 1960 when Leon I. Twarog came from Boston University in order to develop a department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Russian Area Studies, Russian language instruction was essentially a one-man, or rather one woman operation. In 1960, the Russian component of the German department, with the full consent and cooperation of the Chairman of the German Department, the late Professor Dieter Cunz, assumed a somewhat autonomous status, and began rapid expansion. In December of 1960 with funds provided by the Mershon Foundation, Professor Twarog purchased approximately 8,000 volumes of retrospective materials, mostly of pre-revolutionary vintage. This provided the impetus necessary to develop the Slavic collection to a respectable level.

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During the 1960-1961 academic year, an Ad Hoc Committee on Slavic Studies appointed by Dean J. Osborn Fuller of the College of Arts and Sciences formulated a plan for the development of Slavic and E. European Studies at the university, including a full-fledged Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures with work leading to the Ph.D. degree.

Implementation proceeded according to the following timetable. For the 1961-1962 academic year, an undergraduate major in Russian was instituted, and the following year, the M.A. in Russian. A separate department of Slavic Languages and Literatures came into existence in the 1962-1963 academic year with Leon I. Twarog as Chairman. The newly formed department left its quarters in Derby Hall and moved to University Hall.

For 1963-1964 a Graduate Certificate Program in Russian Area Studies which cut across several disciplines became a reality, and for 1964-1965 a Ph.D. Program in Slavic Languages and Literatures was approved, thus completing the basic timetable set up by the original Ad Hoc Committee on Slavic Studies.

In September of 1965 with the help of the U.S. Office of Education, a Language and Area Center for Slavic and E. European Studies was established at the university under the terms of the National Defense Education Act. Professor Twarog was named Director of the Center.

The Slavic Department instituted a new Certificate Program for Training Translators of the Russian Social Sciences in October of 1968, and has been instrumental in bringing to this campus three organizations and/or

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publications which serve the broad area interests of Slavic Studies. The American Bibliography of Slavic and E. European Studies, an annual volume which has been published by the University of Indiana Press is now to be edited by Associate Professor Kenneth E. Naylor, Jr. of the Slavic Department, and will be published by The Ohio State University Press. The National Headquarters of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) moved from the University of Illinois to The Ohio State University on July 1, 1969. Professor George Demko of the Geography Department is the new Executive Secretary. And finally, the Current Digest of the Soviet Press which had been housed at Columbia University for eighteen years, moved to this campus on June 15, 1969. Our own printing plant is handling composition, printing and distribution.

The Department Today

In the past nine years, the teaching staff at the rank of assistant Professor or higher has expanded from two to thirteen. The number of graduate students in residence during the Autumn quarter of 1968 was approximately 48. The department granted 40 M.A. degrees through June of 1969. The first Ph.D. was awarded to Mrs. Jasna Kragalott in March of 1969.

Plans for the Future

On the graduate level, the department is planning to implement Ph.D. options in Polish Literature and Serbo-Croatian Literature beginning with

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1970-1971, and 1971-1972 respectively. Special programs to train undergraduate teachers of Russian language and literature will also be developed in the near future. The department intends to develop a long-range program for translation of scholarly monographs in the Russian Social Sciences as well as contemporary Russian fiction.

In Summary

To 1963 or 1964 The Russian or Slavic Program at The Ohio State University was singularly undistinguished. The vigorous development since 1960 has, within a decade, put the program within the top ten or twelve such programs in the country. As a young department it has not yet had time to develop distinguished Slavacists but that, too, is not too far off.